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APPROVED FOR RELEASE – DISAPPEARANCE OF AMELIA EARHART 2025 REVIEW

Amelia Earhart in cockpit of plane in which she tried to circle globe. Flight, which she called great challenge of her life, ended in mystery.

What happened to Amelia Earhart?

After 23 years, an 'eyewitness' may shed some light on the disappearance of America's most famous aviatrix

by PAUL L. BRIAND JR.

What happened to Amelia Earhart? This question has puzzled the world ever since America's pioneer aviatrix, first woman to fly the Atlantic alone, disappeared over the Pacific on a round-the-world flight with Fred Noonan in 1937. Now, a native Saipan girl tells of Miss Earhart's death in a biography about to be published, titled Daughter of the Sky. *Her story "is most probably true," says the author, a professor at the Air Force Academy. Here it is published for the first time.*

Josephine Blanco, now Mrs. Maximo Akiyama, and living in California with her husband and their young son, was witness to an incident which is as incredible as it is enlightening.

In the summer of 1937 Josephine was riding her bicycle toward Tanapag Harbor. She was taking her Japanese brother-in-law, J. Y. Matsumoto, his lunch, and was hurrying along because it was nearly noon.

That summer she had just finished Japanese grammar school, where she had gone for some years, ever since she was 7 years old. In March she had celebrated her 11th birthday, and now she could begin Catholic school. She was looking forward to studying with the Spanish missionary sisters. Father Tadzio had hoped that someday Josephine, too, like some of the other Chamorro native girls in the Marianas, would answer God's call and become a native sister.

Josephine had a special pass to the Japanese military area near the harbor. Not even Japanese civilians were admitted to the area unless they carried the proper credentials. The young girl rode up to the gate, stopped her bicycle and presented her pass. The guard allowed her into the restricted area.

On the way to meet her brother-in-law, Josephine heard an airplane flying overhead. She looked up and saw a silver two-engined plane. The plane seemed to be in trouble, for it came down low, headed out into the harbor and belly-landed on the water.

It was not until she met her brother-in-law that Josephine discovered who it was that had crash-landed in the harbor.

"The American woman," everyone was saying, greatly excited. "Come and see the American woman." Josephine and her brother-in-law joined the knot of people who gathered to watch.

She saw the American woman standing next to a tall man wearing a short-sleeved sports shirt, and was surprised because the woman was not dressed as a woman usually dressed. Instead of a dress, the American woman wore a man's shirt and trousers; and instead of long hair, she wore her hair cut short, like a man. The faces of the man and woman were white and drawn, as if they were sick.

The American woman who looked like a man and the tall man with her were led away by the Japanese soldiers. The fliers were taken to a clearing in the woods. Shots rang out. The soldiers returned alone.

Mrs. Akiyama has affirmed, after identifying a photograph of Amelia Earhart and Fred Noonan taken on the world flight, that the couple was unquestionably the same man and woman she and her brother-in-law had seen on Saipan: the clothes were different, but the woman's haircut was unmistakable. ■

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